

Marital Relationships, Resistance, and Self-redefinition in *The Women's Room* and *That Long Silence*

*Amal Al-Khayyat, Rula Quawas **

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the representations of marital relationships, women's resistance and their self-redefinition in Marilyn French's *The Women's Room* (1977) and Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence* (1989). It traces the evolving lives of the women characters who are firstly depicted as representatives of the Angel in the House. These women, however, become aware of their speaking and acting potential as well as of the chauvinistic attempts to mute them, and so they resist these attempts and choose to exercise their agency. Ostensibly, their voice-quest becomes also a home-quest, a voice which attempts to change the way women are perceived by themselves and by their societies and cultures.

Keywords: Marital Relationships; Resistance; Self-Redefinition; Angel in the House; Agency; Voice-Quest; Home-Quest.

1. Introduction

This paper explores the voice-quest of women within the institution of marriage as represented in two twentieth-century novels, which are Marilyn French's (1929-2009) *The Women's Room* (first published in 1977) and Shashi Deshpande's (1938-) *That Long Silence* (1989). As it does so, it reflects on the hierarchical relationship in marital relationships within the edifice of patriarchy and traces the women's progressive growth and their determination to fight off all the antagonistic forces against them on their road to self-recovery and self-assertion. It also draws a line between the women characters' actual houses where they live and their search for their own "homes" and illustrates how the women characters' physical movement from one house to another and their border-crossing indicate a transition from one stage to another in their own spiritual and voice-raising pilgrimage. Hence, their voice-quest is a home-quest at the same time. In one way or another, the paper follows the women characters' transformation from silent Angels in the house at the beginning to self-expressive women in the end. What connects the two women characters in the two novels is their voicelessness in the beginning and their voicedness in the end.

Marriage, which is also referred to as matrimony or wedlock, has always been considered idealistically in different countries and cultures as the unity of two souls. It is usually looked at as the natural end of love stories between lovers as it brings them together, abolishes the distances between them, and allows them to raise a family and supposedly live happily ever after. However, in their writings, most feminist scholars question this so-called unity of two souls and the ever-after happy endings of love stories for they think of marital relationships within the institution of patriarchy as the embodiment of the subordination of women to men.

The framework of this paper is the way several feminist critics have most of the time perceived marital relationships within the institution of patriarchy in both the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. The nineteenth century, which was characterized by change and tension, was shaped by a compelling presence of women writers, such as Charlotte Bronte, Louisa May Alcott, Kate Chopin, Jane Austen, and others. In their writings, these women, amongst many others, addressed diverse human issues and rehabilitated the prevailing sentimental conventions and

* Language Center, University of Jordan; Department of English Language, Faculty of Foreign Languages, University of Jordan.
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tropes at the time.

The novels written in the nineteenth century tend to be related to each other in their close attention to women and their domestic lives which are defined by multidimensional experiences. Most commonly, the women writers follow the life of a female protagonist and trace her growth from early adolescence to young adulthood, the period when one usually works out questions of identity, career, and marriage. After painful soul-searching, the female character marries the right suitor, a man whose values are realistic and moral. Interestingly enough, the opening line in Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* speaks of the social conventions according to which individuals in society should act, for "it is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife" (1). As the quotation indicates, what matters is what the man wants, his needs and his sole desires. In other words, a wealthy man is in need to have/possess a wife, and this is simply considered a universal unquestionable truth.

In some of their works, the aforementioned nineteenth-century novelists depict marriage as the shiny endpoint from which their literary concern does not go further. What counts for them is what happens before this marital tie, not following it, as they believe that the union will cease any emotional or spiritual pain. According to Matthew Jockers and David Mimno (2013), "the cultural/historical environment of the author plays a role in determining the choice and relative presence of different themes" (Jockers and Mimno, 2013, p.751). Hence, some nineteenth-century novels, including some of the novels written by Bronte, Alcott, Chopin, and Austin, can be considered a reflection of the dominant sociocultural as well as political thoughts of the novelists of that time.

In order to be considered a true woman in the nineteenth century, the historian Barbara Welter states that a woman should possess four virtues, which are "piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity," which she refers to as "the cult of true womanhood" (Welter, 1966, p.1). She also calls it "the cult of domesticity" (ibid. 1), which means, in one way or another, a woman's ultimate destiny or fate. Relating this notion to Jockers and Mimno's remark, a happy marriage in some nineteenth-century novels involves a man marrying a woman who embodies the cult of true womanhood just like in real life.

On the other hand, in *The Politics of the Feminist Novel*, the American feminist critic Judi Roller (1989) stresses the relationship between marital relationships and patriarchy and states that in feminist novels, marital relationships are presented as a microcosm of patriarchy and capitalism (Roller, 1989, p. 156). Taking Roller's comment into account, the husband is considered superior to his wife. Marital relationships, through the lens of feminist thought, are simply a small projection of patriarchy. Some women writers in the twentieth century consider marriage their starting point. In their novels, as in this paper's two selected novels, they aim to explore the ordeals which the women characters go through in this thought-to-be an ever-lasting sugary and spicy relationship in chauvinistic societies. Thus, if the cult of true womanhood aims to silence and marginalize women, the women characters in the twentieth-century novels do not simply abide by it. They struggle to have a voice and express themselves either within or away from their stunted marriages.

The term "Angel in the House" was first coined by the nineteenth-century poet Coventry Patmore. It is the title of a long narrative poem which portrays the image of the respected and praiseworthy Victorian woman/wife. Additionally, in "Professions for Women," the British feminist writer Virginia Woolf (2000) calls the image of the Angel in the House "a phantom" (Woolf, 2000, p. 1384), who advises her to disregard the fact that she has a mind of her own (Woolf, 2000, p. 1384). Woolf urges women to kill the phantom of the Angel in the House before being killed by her. Her statement fairly implies that when women suppress their minds, they will be killing themselves because their minds stand for who they really are. Having personally killed the phantom, Woolf mentions that she has bought a "motorcar" (Woolf, 2000, p. 1385), which represents her mobility, movement, and departure from the Angel image as she no longer accepts to hide her own intellect, but, on the contrary, wishes to show it and truly express herself.

It is of no doubt that so many studies have been conducted on each of the two novels separately. Nevertheless, this paper is different from the previous studies for it aims to locate ties and fill in gaps and silences between the two originally different novels. In her article "In Search of a Female Bildungsroman: Fictional Feminists in *The Women's*

Room and Memoirs of a Woman Doctor, "Rula Quawas(1999) illustrates that the fictional works of American and Arab women writers in the second half of the twentieth century expose "the tyranny and illegitimacy of patriarchal rule" within the structure of the family and the framework of society (Quawas, 1999, p. 101). Considering it a *Bildungsroman*, Quawas points out that the novel traces "the growth potential of the female youth and the cultivation of herself" (Quawas, 1999, 103). Moreover, in "A Feminist Exploration in the Fictional World of Marilyn French," Maryam Baghbidi(2013) examines the notion of gender as depicted in French's novel. She argues that French, in *The Women's Room*, stresses the importance of regarding women as equal, rather than secondary, to men (Baghbidi, 2013, p. 90). Despite the fact that this paper does not take issue with the previous studies on French's novel, its contribution lies in its focus on the plight of the married woman along with all its trappings, her enduring suffering, her acts of resisting oppression, and her method of expressing herself, rising from the ashes and finding her own voice. As will be illustrated later, wedlock for the women characters is transformed from padlock into a key unlocking future possibilities and unleashing new dreams and desires.

Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence* has also received the attention of scholars and critics. In her article "Gender and Disharmony in Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence*," Chandramani(2014) remarks that the title of the novel "suggests the failure to communicate" (Chandramani, 2014, p. 98). By tracing Jaya's emergence as a confident individual who refuses to be led by the noose, Chandramani concludes that Deshpande's novel represents a plea to free the female psyche from the dominance of the male (Chandramani, 2014, p. 100).

2. Victims of Culture

Despite the differences between the Western and Indian traditions, what places the women characters in the same situation in the two novels is the fact that they are victims of their cultures. Of course, victimhood cannot be homogenized, for it is not one and the same for all women. Its intersectionalism with class, race, and even age is very crucial to take into account. In *Feminism without Borders*, Chandra Mohanty(2003) clearly points out that feminist studies present Third World women as a group of women who are "victimized by the combined weight of their traditions, cultures, and beliefs" (Mohanty, 2003, p. 192). She posits that "universal sisterhood, defined as the transcendence of the "male" world" (Mohanty, 2003, p. 116), is what erases "material and ideological power differences within and among groups of women" (Mohanty, 2003, p. 116). She adds that the term universal sisterhood "assumes a commonality of gender experience across race and gender lines" (Mohanty, 2003, p.193). In other words, the traditional habits are what govern the marital relationships of the female protagonists, assuming a commonality between them regardless of their origins.

The two women characters in French and Deshpande's novels, Mira and Jaya respectively, abide by the image of the Angel in the House in their first houses. They follow the cultural image women are forced to follow in society in order to be considered respectful. As they move to new houses with their husbands, they become aware of how muted they have been in their marital relationships. Thus, they start resisting the cultural image which has prevented them from becoming who they really are. In *Joining the Resistance*, the American feminist and psychologist Carol Gilligan (2011) defines culture as "the way of seeing and speaking that is so much a part of everyday living that it never has to be articulated" (Gilligan, 2011, p. 15). In that sense, culture is a practiced way of "seeing and speaking" that might lead to the acceptance of the social norms and cultural scripts without necessarily questioning them. She illustrates this by stating that "Fish don't know they are swimming in water, until they are a fish out of water" (Gilligan, 2011, p. 16). Hence, she calls for the necessity of questioning and re-envisioning one's position to know where he or she really stands in society, and this is what Mira and Jaya do.

Having rejected the image of the Angel in the House and having resisted against the patriarchal attempts to silence them, Mira and Jaya choose to become agents of change instead of objects. They reach a juncture in their lives, a crossroads that is decisive to their well being-ness. At this point, they have to choose between going back to their old and stifled selves, where their safety is conditioned by their abidance by the societal definition of woman, or to go

through the untrodden path, follow their dreams, and live the life they have always desired to live. They are aware that once they blaze a new pathway, they will never be accepted by society and its constrictive mandates. They are also aware that by deviating from the norm, they will be considered insane or doomed criminals by society, but they insist on deviating anyway. Their determination to deviate at any rate in the end represents their self-redefinition.

3. The Concept of the House

In his article "Understanding Home: a Critical Review of the Literature," Shelley Mallet (2004) differentiates between the notions house and home. He states that house is the physical dwelling, whereas this is one aspect of home. He refers to Saunders and Williams, according to whom home is defined as "simultaneously and indivisibly a spatial and a social unit of interaction" (Mallet, 2004, p. 68). Thus, house is the physical system, whereas home is the socio-spatial one (Mallet, 2004, p.68). Based on this, it is clear that the house is the structure in which people live, whereas home is not only where they physically live, but also where they find space, love and ethics of care. Additionally, in *Place and Placelessness*, Edward Relph(1975) assumes a strong relationship between a place and its residents by distinguishing between two terms, which are "insidedness and outsidedness" (Relph, 1975, p. 49). Relph states that "to be inside a place is to belong to it and to identify with it" (Relph, 1975, p. 49). The study reveals how Mira and Jaya experience Relph's "outsidedness" in their first houses and demonstrates how they only come to experience Relph's "insidedness" when they finally reach their homes and become self-expressive.

4. Discussion

4.1 Enfolded Wings of Silence

In French's novel, following the failure of her relationship with Lanny, Mira gets married to Norm in an attempt to stick to "the Image" (French, 1988, p. 7) set by society since an unmarried woman rarely enjoys a good reputation in her society where "everyone admired men" (French, 1988, p. 16). By getting married to Norm, Mira fulfills her childhood dream to live in a fairyland as she believes that "there are no bad kings in fairyland" (French, 1988, p. 4). As Mira's story is narrated by the New Mira, whose life is said by her friend Val to be "an education in suppressing self" (French, 1988, p. 58), one can conclude that Mira has always been suppressed in her marital relationship with Norm. The New Mira is wise enough to say that the old fairyland-Mira "had no notion of reality" (French, 1988, p. 6). Having gone through a lot, she has come to conclude that fairylands, where there are no bad kings, do not exist. The word kings, in that sense, signifies male rulers, or even husbands, for she has personally encountered one who has always attempted to silence her.

Interestingly enough, her husband's name is Norm, which indicates that he stands for the social norms accepted so blindly by patriarchal societies. Thus, his wife should be an angel, for this is the norm in society. After their marriage, Mira asks Norm to teach her to drive, but he totally refuses, saying that "she was not mechanically apt and would be a poor driver" (French, 1988, p. 37). Relating Mira's inability to drive in the first house to Virginia Woolf's motorcar and the necessity of mobility after killing the phantom of the Angel in the House, Mira is entombed within the image in her first house with Norm as she is immobile. Despite having been a distinguished student throughout her life, she not only agrees to leave school, but also decides to never "go back there again" (French, 1988, p. 37). She works as a clerk-typist to financially support her husband's study as he is a medical student. She gives him priority over her, and accepts to play the role of the inferior housewife who does everything to please her husband and forget about herself as Patmore suggests in his poem. She, thus, becomes the embodiment of the Angel in the House.

In "The Women's Room," Sandra Parker (1995) illustrates that French's novel offers "a criticism of men's androcentric worldview" (Parker, 1995, sec. Form and Content, parag. 4). Parker argues that the novel challenges "the reader to think about the philosophical issues involved in choosing selfhood rather than servitude" (Parker, 1995, sec. Form and Content, parag. 5). She adds that the novel "provides a feminine perspective that rejects the positioning of women as the "other" or object in a world determined and controlled by men" (Parker, 1995, sec. Context, parag. 2).

The androcentric worldview of men is also criticized in Deshpande's novel *That Long Silence*. Jaya describes her first house with Mohan as "ugly" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 117). She remembers the words of the women in Mohan's family, who initiated them to "inane post-wedding ceremonial games" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 6) and asked her and Mohan to move their fingers in "a mound of rice in a plate" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 6-7). The game stipulates that "the one who finds the coin first rules the other at home," (Deshpande, 1989, p. 6), and although Jaya is the one who finds the rupee first, she confesses that she has spent "years of submission" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 6) in that house, as throwing the coin "means nothing really" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 7). Jaya links the ugliness of the house to her unhappy life with Mohan by stating that "the unhappiness" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 117) "had seemed as much a part" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 117) of it. She recalls that the walls of the house are "badly, unevenly plastered" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 117) and the paint is "discoloured by the damp that had seeped through" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 117). As she has "felt in some way trapped" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 117) in that house and "can't bear" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 117) it, Mohan promises her to find another house when she gives birth to their first baby, and so they move to another house.

In their second house at Churchgate, Jaya remains a representative of the Angel in the House. Unlike Mohan, who has a clear idea of what he wants, the kind of life he wants to lead, and the kind of home he wants to live in, Jaya does not know what she personally wants. Her problem with Mohan is that she is robbed of her right to know what she really wants for she has always acquiesced to his needs and desires. She does everything according to his own desires; she even learns how to control her anger in front of him so as not to see distaste on his face as he believes that "anger made a woman 'unwomanly'" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 83). She only says what he wants her to say, expresses what he wants her to express, and writes what he wants her to write. In other words, she does not own a voice of her own. She even chooses to remain silent for she knows that his mood is "best met with silence" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 78).

Jaya blindly follows the image of the ideal wife "Gandhari, who bandaged her eyes to become blind like her husband" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 61). Upon Mohan's loss of his job at Churchgate, Jaya leaves with him to a third house, which is their Dadar flat, in Bombay. Her passivity in their first two houses is also indicated by the fact that the decision to move to a new house was made by Mohan as she illustrates: "You said 'Let's go to Dadar,' and I came here with you!" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 116). At another incident she tells him: "I've done everything you wanted me to." (Deshpande, 1989, p. 120). Upon their marriage, and having found a threat in his wife's name, for it means victory, Mohan changes Jaya's name to Suhasini in an attempt to silence her victory. The Suhasini wife, which Jaya accepts to become in the first house, is one who believes that she is safe if she stays at home and looks after her babies (Deshpande, 1989, p. 17). She is "a woman who lovingly nurtured her family" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 16). In other words, she is a domestic woman only, someone who is inferiorized to that position with no future prospects whatsoever. Thus, in her first house, Jaya's attributes are similar to the attributes of Patmore's Angel in the House.

The passivity of the housewife is also portrayed in French's novel. In the beginning of her marital relationship with Norm, Mira feels "armed by the title of *Mrs.*, property of some man" (French, 1988, p. 38). She feels secure under the protection of a man who has owned her as an object. She devotes herself to her husband, and learns how to cook and do her chores as a good housewife. Her role as a housewife is determined by the divisions of her small house, which consists only of "the kitchen and the bed-living room" (French, 1988, p. 39). Despite her thought-to-be protection, Mira feels most of the time "like a child who had stumbled, bumbled into the wrong house" (French, 1988, p. 39). Whenever she tries to read at night after spending eight hours in the office and getting done with her chores, her concentration is broken because "Norm always had TV on at night" (French, 1988, p. 39), and so she stops reading. In other words, Mira considers the house alien or "wrong" because she has no physical or spiritual room of her own in it as she cannot read and get enlightened. In this house, she tells Norm about her wish "to go back to school and eventually get a PhD. and teach" (French, 1988, p. 39), and as Norm is "horrified" by his wife's wish, he starts listing impediments in order to silence her, such as their financial difficulties and her exhaustion, and at this he succeeds. At any rate, in her first house, Mira remains silent and does not act on her negative situation.

Mira's case of being the Angel in the House also extends to her second house, to which she moves with her husband

and befriends her neighbors Adele, Natalie, and Bliss, three married women who face problems with their husbands. Upon her movement to the new house, Mira's physical, social, and mental scopes get wider. She remarks that her husband's supposed protection means "locking herself in, by not looking at them [men] or thinking about them" (French, 1988, p. 70).

Among the main issues Mira discusses with her new friends is what their husbands like to eat or drink. For instance, Adele remarks that "Paul likes his coffee strong" (French, 1988, p. 76), and Mira indicates that "Norm refuses to eat pork" (French, 1988, p. 76). It is what their husbands like, not what they personally like, that really counts for them, and neither Mira nor her neighbors dare challenge "the men's right to demand and control" (French, 1988, p. 77). Nevertheless, the parties they begin to hold at their houses awaken them to the fact "that they had another self from the one they lived with daily" (French, 1988, p. 79), and this dormant self is the muted and suppressed one. It is the true self that cares about what women really want, regardless of what their husbands want or demand.

The selflessness of a housewife is depicted in Deshpande's novel as part of the Indian tradition. Hindu married women fast for the avoidance of widowhood (Deshpande, 1989, p. 67). In other words, they pray for their husbands' existence, which they believe to count more than their own existence. Additionally, marriage is defined by the "large, perfect red circle" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 139), which is called *kumkum*, shining in the middle of the married woman's forehead regardless of the goodness or non-goodness of her husband. It is typically a religious marking on the married woman's forehead in the Indian tradition, and it is different from what women in Western cultures do. The *kumkum* powder not only signifies that the woman is married, but is also a source of gratitude for her superior husband, as Jaya's maid, Jeeja, remarks scolding her husband's daughter-in-law, Tara, for wishing that her husband Rajaram, who treats her violently, may die: "Don't forget, he keeps the *kumkum* on your forehead. What is a woman without that?" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 53). In other words, her existence as a woman is not only conditioned by her husband's existence, but also contributes to her husband's superiority over her.

Mohan's pride that his wife is a writer is conditioned by the fact that she writes the stories about Seeta. The name Seeta is pronounced like the name of the mythical figure Sita, who "[followed] her husband into exile" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 11). Thus, it is conditioned by Jaya's not taking herself seriously and by her selflessness, and this is what Jaya actually does in her first house. Writing the Seeta column, Jaya simply skulks "behind a false name" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 148), and this false name is simply another form of *kumkum* which Jaya places on her writings. The Sita figure stands for the chastity and purity of women who are submissive to their husbands in the Indian tradition, where a woman's role is sharply defined. Despite the fact that Jaya's position as a writer adds to Mohan's status and recognition, in their first house, he does not take her talent seriously. The reason behind that could be his jealousy of her profession, because as a husband, he wants to be his wife's vocation and "means of livelihood" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 75). Besides, when Jaya tells him she feels like he loves his niece Revati more than he loves his own son, he replies that it is her "writer's imagination" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 79) that makes her think so "with a smile that would put inverted commas around 'writer's imagination'" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 79). Thus, Mohan in one way or another underestimates Jaya's profession and makes fun of her talent. Only when he loses his job does he thank God that Jaya has the Seeta column, which will be of help to them although it does not have "much money in it" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 99). In other words, he looks at her profession as a source of money and sustenance, not as a method of self-expression or as a means of existence.

Jaya's selflessness as a housewife shows in her being "Mohan's wife. Rahul's and Rati's mother" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 69). It is also revealed in her loss of her real name, Jaya, and its positive connotations, and her acceptance of the new name, Suhasini, along with its negative connotations. She remarks on the relationship between her name and her status as Mohan's wife by pointing out that she has once written her name in the sand on the beach and was stunned to find nothing there later for "there was just blankness, the sea had erased everything. 'You are his wife'..." (Deshpande, 1989, p. 161). Thus, her status is determined by the fact that she can either be Jaya or Mohan's wife, not both of them together. During a visit to her townhouse, Jaya meets the head of her family, Ramukaka, who shows her a family tree

he prepared. Astonished that her name is not on the tree, Ramukaka explains to her that it is because she is married and she now belongs to her husband's family. Accordingly, Jaya wonders and asks herself: If her marriage to a stranger is the reason, then what about the other women who are married to men belonging to this family? As no one ever questioned Ramukaka (Deshpande, 1989, p. 143), Jaya decides not to reveal her other questions pertaining to the non-existence of her mother and grandmother who are married to men belonging to this family on the tree. She has, thus, learnt not to raise questions and to remain silent.

Additionally, in her first house, Jaya writes a prize-winning story using her real name, Jaya. When the story is published, Mohan is hurt that as Jaya has done so, the people will suspect the couple in the story to be she and her husband (Deshpande, 1989, p. 144). Hence, the fact that Jaya, afterwards, returns to the Seeta column manifests her submission to what her husband wants. In one way or another, her attempt to speak back by using her real name has been hindered by her husband, just like Mira's wish to go back to school.

In their first houses, Mira becomes Mrs. Property and Jaya becomes the silent Suhasini. Mira is deprived by Norm of her right to continue her study and become a teacher, and Jaya is robbed by Mohan of her right to freely express herself as a writer. At any rate, the two of them are barred of their right to have what they really want and desire. The reason behind their acceptance of their situations is their abidance by the societal image scripted for women, according to which women learn to internalize men's misogyny and their inferiority to men.

Despite their different cultural backgrounds, Mira and Jaya resemble each other in that they are represented as weak, timid and powerless housewives in their first houses. However, they do not remain so till the end of the novels. Driven by their feeling of "placelessness" and "outsidedness" in the house of the Angel in the House, Mira and Jaya decide to resist the societal attempts to mute their real selves and keep them as Angels.

4.2 Resistance: Determination to Fly

The French feminist writer Luce Irigaray (1980) urges women to care for their own suppressed selves in her essay "When Our Lips Speak Together." She states that women, in patriarchal calculations, "count as two" (Irigaray, 1980, p.71), and that this split in the woman's self helps men "move towards one's mirage: a mirror" (Irigaray, 1980, p.71), where they narcissistically seek their own reflection. In other words, Irigaray encourages women to cross the borders set up for them and to get closer to the real selves they have been banished from. She urges them to embrace their authentic selves, oppose the status of being "distant" (Irigaray, 1980, p.79) from who they really are, and refuse being "divided" (Irigaray, 1980, p.79) in the first place. She states, "You don't have to have an "outside," since "the other" already affects you" (Irigaray, 1980, p. 74).

Irigaray believes that women's fighting against patriarchy starts from within. They should allow themselves to be affected by their inner selves through getting in touch with who they are and taking off the masks they are wearing. They should permit themselves to get rid of the thoughts they have culturally internalized and believe in their oneness for, in Irigaray's words, when "separated, 'we' does not exist" (Irigaray, 1980, p.72). Once women start from within and believe in their own selves, "the female 'all' will come" (Irigaray, 1980, p. 75). Irigaray's essay is considered a call for the women to resist the split in their selves which patriarchy has created for its own benefit as she explains, "No need to fashion a mirror to be "a pair" (Irigaray, 1980, p. 78).

Moreover, in "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision," Adrienne Rich (1972) refers to "the oppressive nature of male/female relations" (Rich, 1972, p. 18) in society. She defines re-visioning a text as "the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes" (Rich, 1972, p. 18). As the title of her essay implies, re-vision is an act of awakening as well as, to quote her, "an act of survival" (Rich, 1972, p. 18). It is "a refusal to the self-destructiveness of male-dominated society" (Rich, 1972, p. 18). In that sense, re-visioning a text with fresh eyes is considered an act of resistance for it allows women to "begin to see – and therefore live, afresh" (18) away from the way they "have been led to imagine" (Rich, 1972, p. 18) themselves. Rich reinforces the necessity of "a certain freedom of the mind" (Rich, 1972, p. 23) for women to express themselves and own their voices and thoughts without the fear of being "overheard

by men" (Rich, 1972, p. 20) as they should not care about "the way the men of the culture" (Rich, 1972, p. 20) think women should sound. She refers to the "myth of the special woman" (21), where a woman follows men's "ideas of what a special woman ought to be" (Rich, 1972, p. 20-1). She, accordingly, invites women to disbelieve in this myth and to trust their own abilities for they can become "teachers, writers, academicians" (Rich, 1972, p. 21). She urges women to resist the cultural conventions that have led to their belief that they are "primarily mothers and muses for men" (Rich, 1972, p. 25). If they have been made to believe that they are dead, by re-envisioning their own status and abilities, they do have the power to awaken and get back to life. Thus, the resistance Rich calls for is an opposition to what is normally assumed to be the normal image or representation of women.

The term resistance, regardless of the field it is used in, refers to a reaction or opposition to a specific power. If the nineteenth-century dominant image of the Angel in the House is considered a natural flow of the current, the female characters who offer opposition to this image in the selected novels are considered resistant in one way or another as they fight against the split in their selves. Their opposition to the image is a result of the imposed patriarchal power and dominance which aim to control and mute them. Only when these women become aware of their potential and rights, do they decide to challenge the status quo and to face it with questioning and then with rejection. Thus, the term resistance in the two novels represents the female characters' refusal to give in or up regardless of the intricate pressures they face. It stands for their rejection of the patriarchal attempts to silence women as they struggle to have a voice and a status in society.

In French's novel, Mira rejects the patriarchal conventions imposed on women through reaching a good level of self-awareness and knowledge. Having been betrayed by her friends, who use her as a scapegoat to conceal their extramarital relationships with each other, Mira finds out that she is left with her "loneliness" (French, 1988, p. 144). She moves with Norm and the kids to a third house, which Norm, ironically, refers to as "a 'real' house" (French, 1988, p. 145). In the new house, Mira misses "the daily intimacy and people who lived close by" (French, 1988, p. 144) and finds the house "too big and too isolated" (French, 1988, p. 145). Thus, the house's isolation reflects Mira's feeling of loneliness. With no nearby stores and no car to facilitate her movement, she is frightened by the house as "she felt she was sinking, sinking – into what she wasn't sure" (French, 1988, p. 145). Her way of looking upon the new house is similar to the way, to quote Relph, "a traveller might look upon a town from a distance" (French, 1988, p. 49). Apparently, she feels distant and does not identify with it. What she turns out to be moving to is her self-awareness and recognition as her loneliness in the new house confronts her with the reality of her marriage to Norm. In other words, her loneliness allows her to scrutinize her relationship with Norm and see with Rich's fresh eyes how suppressed and voiceless she has always been.

Mira comes to realize that "loneliness is not a longing for company, it is a longing for kind. And kind means people who can see who you are" (French, 1988, p. 146). It is interesting to notice that the person Mira needs to see who she really is is her own self. In her new house, she finds nobody to talk to except for herself. Her loneliness allows her to hear her muted voice as she becomes able to "provide a fairly good running dialogue" (French, 1988, p. 147) with what she refers to as "myself, myself, myself" (French, 1988, p. 147). The muted voice reminds her of how valueless she has been throughout her marital life with Norm. As she becomes closer to her repressed self and hears its voice, she simultaneously starts re-visioning her marriage and sees the ugliness of the new house. She also notices its pitfalls. She dislikes the house because it is full of the landlord's "leftover furniture" (French, 1988, p. 147) and of "dying plants on the windowsills" (French, 1988, p. 147). She acknowledges that having been the Angel in the House, she herself has become a leftover piece of furniture and a dying plant since she was married to Norm.

Mira's new house witnesses her awareness of her total helplessness and dependency on Norm. It turns out to be her real house like Norm said, for only in it does she acknowledge the reality she has always disregarded, which is that when getting married, you do not necessarily "live happily ever after, but you do live anyway" (French, 1988, p. 149). She becomes aware of the great role of physical places in one's life as she says that some places function as "crossroads on a map" (French, 1988, p. 147), for they can be "where everything changed, the word upon which everything hinged"

(French, 1988, p. 147). In that sense, her new house becomes her actual crossroads, where she herself changes and can no longer be the same. As her loneliness allows her to be united with her suppressed authentic self, she becomes aware of her other self hiding behind the mask of the Angel in the House. She wholeheartedly decides to take off the mask and to follow Rich's advice by awakening the woman within her.

No matter how much time and effort she spends doing the chores given to her by her husband, such as "suits to be cleaned, shoes to be mended" (150), Mira's job ends up being belittled and underestimated by Norm who asks her, "And what did the little mother do today?" (French, 1988, p. 166). In this big house, knowing that her husband "did not want to pay for help in the house" (French, 1988, p. 149), Mira becomes apprehensive of her total financial reliance on him. She comes to realize that she herself is a piece of property owned by Norm, the Doctor. She flowers his tree of wealth, but owns nothing. She recognizes what being a piece of property means, for "she felt bought and paid for, and it was all of a piece; the house, the furniture, she, all were his, it said so on some piece of paper" (French, 1988, p. 167). While discussing the kids' issues with Norm, she hears the voice of her mind singing:

*In my yard is a little money tree;
It flowers and it flowers, but none of it's for me.
And all the neighbor women envy me my wealth.
But all the little dollars growing on that tree;
Belong to Norm the Doctor, none of them to me.* (French, 1988, p. 165, Italics in original)

Thus, Mira turns out to dislike her status as Mrs. Property, the same title she has previously felt protected and armed by. On one of the nights she and Norm spend with her own friends, two of her friends' husbands quarrel. She is aware that Norm will no longer permit her to attend any of her friends' parties and awakens to the idea that despite being a thirty-two-year old woman, she "needed permission to do something just as if she were a child" (French, 1988, p. 177).

Mira envies her friend Martha whose going back to college has allowed her to enter a sphere "larger than the one women usually occupied" (French, 1988, p. 190) and has given her "confidence and authority" (French, 1988, p. 190). Upon this feeling of jealousy, in an act of rejection, Mira's childhood ambitions rise again in her memory and stick there despite her attempt to brush them away. She remembers "her teachers' high estimate of her intellect and abilities" (French, 1988, p. 191). She recalls how she herself "had always seen herself as *the* intellect" (French, 1988, p. 190, Italics in original). She goes back in her memories and remembers when she thought Norm was "less intelligent than herself" (French, 1988, p. 192). As Martha refers to Norm as "The Great God Norm" (French, 1988, p. 192), Mira starts questioning in her mind the reason why she has considered him so and given him absolute authority over herself. He has prevented her from getting the education she deserves. She becomes aware that "honorary degrees" (French, 1988, p. 192) are not for women, as women's role in this world revolves around keeping the beauty and cleanliness of "the world's house" (French, 1988, p. 192) which belongs to men. As Mira's memories oppose the societal formula of who is privileged and who is suppressed, they are considered a method of resistance which she follows to deny her status as an Angel in the House. These (re)memories come to define her new resisting self and to heal her festering wounds which have kept her un-resistant and in agonizing pain in her relationship with Norm. They act against her self-underestimation during her marriage to Norm and help her to achieve self-realization instead.

The re(memories) technique is likewise followed in Deshpande's novel by Jaya. As she narrates the story of her old self when she used to live in the Dadar flat, she goes back in her memories and recalls herself as a writer of a column titled "The Diaries of a Sane Housewife" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 70), where the sanity of a housewife is related to the dominant cultural precept. It refers to a housewife who completely loses her vision, abides by the image of "Gandhari, who bandaged her eyes to become blind" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 61), and silently follows her husband. The notion of sanity is referred to by Helene Cixous (1976), who states that in patriarchal societies a woman is trained to be

"ashamed of her strength" (Cixous, 1976, p. 876). If she happens "to open [her mouth]" or "repaint [her] half of the world," she is forced to accuse herself of being mad as "her shameful sickness is that she resists death" (Cixous, 1976, p. 876). In other words, a woman who dares to awaken from her doomed death is culturally considered an insane woman for she has "a funny desire stirring inside her (to sing, to write, to dare to speak, in short, to bring out something new)" and express herself (Cixous, 1976, p. 876). Insanity is, thus, a title given to her by patriarchy due to her protest against it and to her deviation from the image of Victorian women who, as Virginia Woolf (2000) states in *A Room of One's Own*, "have served all these centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size" (Woolf, 2000, p. 33). In other words, a woman is considered insane when she dares to become her own mirror and reflect her own light instead of being men's mirror and reflecting their ego.

Going back to her diaries, Jaya recalls that the question which confronted her in the past when writing the Seeta column in the same house was: "Is this all?" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 70). She, nevertheless, continues writing the column in *Women's World* and abiding by the connotations of the mythological Sita figure, who is faced by "what shall I make for breakfast/lunch/tea/dinner?" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 70) as the biggest question. In other words, Jaya has always been a sane woman who believes that this is what matters in the women's world, as the name of the magazine Jaya writes for implies. Nevertheless, she has always felt detached from the character she writes about. Despite the fact that writing this column has made her famous, when reading what she has written, Jaya feels as if "seeing someone masquerading" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 119) as herself. In that sense, one can say that the socially considered image of a sane woman, represented by the Seeta woman, conceals Jaya's socially insane self behind her. When re-visioning her writing, Jaya becomes aware of what Irigaray refers to as the dividedness of the self. She acknowledges the existence of two Jayas, the one who writes the column, and the suppressed one who does not identify with the writing. She remarks, "As if I was masquerading as the woman who wrote that column" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 119). The Jaya who writes is, to quote Helene Cixous, "given a deadly brainwashing" (Cixous, 1976, p. 877) for as Jaya states, she "had no doubts about anything, only strong convictions" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 119), and the convictions are the cultural beliefs which place her in an inferior position.

Jaya recognizes that by being the sane Seeta-column writer, she has shaped herself "so resolutely" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 144) following Mohan's desires for years. Due to the fact that Mohan does not allow her to express herself freely in a non-Seeta writing, Jaya decides to stop writing as an act of resistance. By abandoning the Seeta column, she resists what Rich refers to as the myth of the special woman, according to which a woman is encouraged to read and write "for a particular man, who criticized and praised [her] and made [her] feel indeed 'special'" (Rich, 1972, p. 21). In other words, Jaya becomes aware of the fact that she has "tried for a long time to please [Mohan], or rather, not to displease him" (Rich, 1972, p. 21). Upon her movement to her third house, which is the same old flat, Jaya follows the advice given to her by her neighbor, Kamat, who asks her to take herself "seriously" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 99), criticizes and rebukes her for using "a false name" (146), and notices the lack of "a personal vision" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 147) in her writing. He remarks that her stories are "too restrained" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 147) and asks her to vent her anger in them. To be sure, Kamat asks Jaya to be real and defy Mohan, who believes that "anger made a woman unwomanly" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 83). As Kamat believes that "there would be something replacing 'Seeta'" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 69) if she herself starts taking herself seriously, the one who turns out to be replacing Seeta is the real Jaya, who gets united with her long-suppressed self and puts an end for her exile from her authentic self. Interestingly enough, like Mira, through her (re)memories, Jaya happens to see with fresh eyes how divorced she has been from her true self in her marriage to Mohan. By making up her mind to no longer be a Seeta-writer in her new house, the same house turns out to be her crossroads, where she can no longer be the same old person.

Jaya is aware that her brother wants her to contact his wife, Asha, and tell her "*Go back home and obey your husband, and never mind whatever it is he has done, he's your husband, after all, and a husband can do no wrong*" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 115, Italics in original). However, by asking her brother, "Ravi, what have you

done?" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 109), Jaya apparently opposes the conventions of both society and the Seeta column character by questioning her brother and assuming that he, who is Asha's husband, can possibly do wrong to his wife. Moreover, although she promises him to call Asha and advise her to return to her husband's house, the novel ends without Jaya's contacting or advising Asha by any means, and this is another form of resistance which Jaya undertakes as she does not contribute to the circulation of the taken-for-granted lie that a husband is beyond reproach.

Jaya remarks that "for the first time, Mohan was really listening" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 115) to her following her meeting with her brother, which indicates that in their previous houses, Mohan has never really listened to Jaya and that she has always been a silent housewife. When Mohan knows that Jaya has mentioned to Ravi that he is in trouble at work, he gets frustrated, feels emasculated, and takes the matter very seriously. His anger over Ravi's affair, which resembles Norm's anger over Samantha's issue, leaves Jaya "cruelly conscious" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 121). Jaya's growing and awakening consciousness is, undoubtedly, a form of resistance; she becomes "conscious of having been chained to his dream" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 120) since getting married to him. She realizes that she has always done whatever pleases him and ignored her own wishes. For the first time ever, Jaya dares to face him with the fact that he has never allowed her to do what she wants when it "inconvenienced him" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 120), such as when she wanted to take the job she wished to take as a writer.

Mohan's anger is caused by the transformation he sees in Jaya's character as she dares to express herself and disobey him. He is frustrated because he can see that Jaya is no longer the same old Jaya he knows. He senses her sense of confidence and self-determination and accuses her of being "so unconcerned" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 116) about his trouble and of caring neither about the children nor about his needs (Deshpande, 1989, p. 120). Mohan's accusations represent an attempt to make Jaya, to use Cixous' words, "feel guilty- so as to be forgiven" (Cixous 1972, p. 877). They are simply an attempt to return her to the Angel in the House enclosure.

In "Articulation of the Feminine Voice: A Study of *That Long Silence*," KusumGulia(2015) states that the novel "is not an intrusion into the world of silence but a silent communication with the oppressed self – straining for articulation, for a voice" (Gulia, 2015, p. 423). Gulia adds that "the novel traces how Jaya gradually emerges as a confident individual fully in control of herself and refuses to be led by [sic] noose" (Gulia, 2015, p. 424). She highlights Jaya's resistance by illustrating that Jaya "rejects the image of traditional women like Sita, Savitri and Draupadi" (Gulia, 2015, p. 424). Thus, Gulia believes that Jaya's erasure of the silence at the end of the novel "symbolizes the assertion of her feminine voice" (Gulia, 2015, p. 424).

Triumph is likewise sought by Mira in *The Women's Room*. When she knows about her friend Samantha's financial problem, Mira makes up her mind to help her friend by providing her with the money she needs for the mortgage payment. Nevertheless, Norm refuses to help Samantha despite his wealth; for him, a woman has no power over financial issues. Accordingly, for the first time ever, Mira starts questioning her position in a loud voice. She asks Norm whether she is "an equal participant in this marriage" (French, 1988, p.199) and whether she contributes to their marriage or not, and Norm denies receiving any financial contribution from her part. In other words, Samantha's issue opens the gate for a power struggle and a battle between Mira and Norm. Realizing that her reliance on him increases his sense of power over her, she insists on helping her friend out of her feeling of being deprived of her right to own a voice. As Mira becomes aware of her total financial dependence on her husband, she decides to unfold her dependent role from within as advised by Margaret Fuller, a feminist writer in the nineteenth century, and seeks to ultimately win the battle by all measures.

In "Patriarchy and Women's Subordination: A Theoretical Analysis," Abeda Sultana illustrates that "patriarchy is the prime obstacle to women's advancement and development" (Sultana, 2010-2011, p. 1). She adds that it "describes the institutionalized system of male dominance" (Sultana, 2010-2011, p. 7) over women, whose "feeling of powerlessness, discrimination, and experience of limited self esteem and self-confidence" contribute to their subordination in patriarchal society (Sultana, 2010-2011, p. 7). In other words, the less women's self-esteem and confidence get, the better it is for patriarchy. As Mira starts to question her position as a wife, Norm feels threatened

and emasculated. He no longer sees or feels her "helplessness" (French, 1988, p. 206), for her helplessness is "a vulnerability that touched his deepest core" (French, 1988, p. 205). Accordingly, he not only underestimates her chores but also her whole existence by stating that he does not need her to do that work, for he could "have a housekeeper, or live in a hotel" (French, 1988, p. 199). Mira feels that she has never been taken seriously by Norm, not even when she has lived up to the image of the Angel in the House. She realizes that her world has always been "dictated by Norm" (French, 1988, p. 224) and comes "to see that his authority over her was based on mutual agreement" (French, 1988, p. 201). She concedes that she has "allowed him to close out her friends from their life, and that had shrunk her" (French, 1988, p. 200). The new house, thus, becomes Mira's crossroads only when she rejects to be entombed in the "convent" (French, 1988, p. 40) which Norm previously intended to lock her up in. Her whole body starts "shaking" (French, 1988, p. 200), like the one of a bird in a cage, in an attempt to fold its wings and fly away.

Mira becomes aware of how distant fairylands are, for they are "back beyond the door" (French, 1988, p. 208). Considering herself oppressed, she starts questioning the position of oppressed people in society and finds out that they "have the right to use criminal means to survive. Criminal means being, of course, defying the laws passed by the oppressors to keep the oppressed in line" (French, 1988, p. 208). In that sense, Mira believes that being criminal means being resistant to the norm, and it turns out to be her only way possible for survival. Thus, she decides to be counted a criminal for defying and fighting against the patriarchal law. She knows full well that women "are bound in by the terms of the sentence. Subject-verb-object" (French, 1988, p. 208), which is the same patriarchal sentence Simone de Beauvoir speaks of, and according to which men are agents and women are objects. Thus, she decides to turn the sentence around and become the subject by continuing her study and using her white ink to author her life in the way she desires and pleases.

Mira makes a choice to take matters into her own hands. By entering "the amount and recipient in large letters in their joint checkbook," (202) she fights back against Norm's dominance over her own self. She tells Samantha when helping her, "Actually, I can't explain, but it's for me, not you" (French, 1988, p. 202). It turns out to be an attempt to assert, not only for Norm, but also for her own self, that she has a right/voice in the joint checkbook. Following Samantha's incident, and although Norm never mentions this act to her, an obvious transformation takes place in Mira's personality due to her growing appreciation of her new-found self. The incident allows Mira to kill the Angel in the House in her bodily and spiritual constitution, the angel who always welcomes her husband after work and opens "her mouth obediently to say the usual words, 'How was your day?'" (French, 1988, p. 218). Although Mira tries hard to utter the same words, "they wouldn't come out" (French, 1988, p. 218). Nevertheless, Norm, who stands for the oppressive norm in patriarchy, and who has always muted Mira's attempts of having a voice, rejects her action. He punishes her for having killed the Angel in the House by rewarding the new transformed Mira with an unexpected divorce.

The death of the Angel in the House is also noticed by Jaya's husband. When he fails to see his wife's powerlessness, his eyes become "the eyes of a man who'd lost a dear one" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 121) upon the disappearance of his Suhasini. Jaya, triumphantly, announces the death of Suhasini as she confesses that "Suhasini was dead" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 121) and that she has "finally done it" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 121) and killed the Angel in the House. The agony Jaya sees in Mohan's eyes results from his discovery that his wife is no longer passive and silent, but an active woman who has an independent, critical mind. He links the transformative power in her character to their new arrival in the house by asking her, "Do you think I haven't seen how changed you are since we came here?" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 122). Though she never had a voice before, she owns one in her new house, where she is able to deviate from the stereotypical Seeta-writer, embrace herself, and identify with the new place.

Like Mira, who could no longer force herself to utter the obedient words expected from a domesticated housewife, Jaya fails to put words together in an attempt to apologize to Mohan for ridiculing his tough accusations of her. She refuses to feel guilty and to seek Mohan's forgiveness despite his attempts to fill her with guilt and remake an Angel of the House from her. As Mohan no longer sees the Suhasini character in his wife, his face reminds Jaya of her son's face

when she pulled the bottle from his mouth long time ago. The fact that she has always been his Suhasini and Seeta has always nurtured his ego and burgeoned its growth, which explains why it is hard for him to see himself being deprived of his source of growing power after all these years. Nevertheless, although Jaya does pity him in a way, she makes an effort to resist the agony she sees in his eyes by not surrendering to his intended patriarchal look.

It takes Mira and Jaya three houses to grow, resist, and become strong enough to distance themselves from the old characters they have been before. Following their awakening, the two women reject the definitions set for them by society and manage to redefine themselves by becoming who they wish to become, the professor and the writer respectively. Having realized that their competencies and talents have not been recognized as agency in the past, Mira and Jaya choose to defy the image which is mainly manufactured by societal norms and mores. Their shedding of the constraining image, thus, implies their willingness to enter a different space even though it might prove to be tangential with regard to some aspects of their lives. They choose to shed their old selves and to create new selves that are expressive of their needs and heartfelt desires.

4.3 Redefining the Self

In her book *In a Different Voice*, Carol Gilligan (2011) refers to the American psychologist Matina Horner, the originator of the fear of success theory. Horner believes that the apprehension of success, for most women, "produces anticipation of certain negative consequences, for example, threat of social rejection and loss of femininity" (qtd. in Gilligan, 2011, p. 15). In other words, whereas young women's talents direct them towards fulfilling their goals, their fear of losing their socially-defined femininity urges them to go in a different direction because a woman is not allowed to do certain things in society. The same theory is also emphasized in "Fear of Success Revisited: A Replication of Matina Horner's Study 30 Years Later," where Jennifer Engle (2003) reinforces that "while the legal barriers to women's participation in education and employment have been removed, there are social barriers that remain" (Engle, 2003, p. 5). It is true that there is no legal document disallowing women from success, but their success may sometimes require a very high social price, which they might not afford to pay, for the price is their erasure and their loss of social womanhood whose standards are man-made and set by society.

Mira comes to realize the importance of nurturing her own self by owning a room of her own. Following her divorce from Norm, she decides to go back to school at Cambridge and get the degree she has previously relinquished for his sake. In that sense, she overcomes her old fear of success which has previously prohibited her from following her dream. Her friend Val remarks that Cambridge is "a home for the homeless" (French, 1988, p.253), and it later becomes homeless Mira's home, where she can find herself, excel and feel at ease. It is where she is able to continue her study and be an educator. Her education allows her to nurture her inner seeds and become fully present after the many years of passivity and absence which she had spent with Norm.

Later, despite falling truly in love with a man she meets following her divorce, Ben, the Africa expert, Mira is determined not to be coerced by anyone any more. She senses a new Norm in Ben, who "had never asked her if she wanted to go to Africa, he had just assumed that she would" (French, 1988, p. 486). Since Ben has decided that Mira would easily agree to marry him, go with him to Africa, and abandon her study, Mira feels offended and fears being written off once again in her life. She believes that Ben has given privilege to his desires and neglected her own aspirations. Addressing Ben, she states, "never thought about me! About my needs, my life, my desires! You *eradicated* me, me as a person apart from you as successfully as Norm did!" (French, 1988, p. 487, *Italics in original*).

Thus, Ben has become another version of Norm as he attempts to hold her back to her old self which she has tried to shed. Her self-determination shows in her answer to Ben's question, "Your needs, your life, your desires. What are they?" (French, 1988, p. 488) As she illustrates, "I know I love what I'm doing now, and that I'd like to go on doing it. I want to finish my dissertation" (French, 1988, p. 488). Her answer is indicative of her self-assertion. She simply chooses to assert herself instead of being obliterated by Ben. She continues, "I think I'd like to teach. I know I want to do literary criticism, and I *will* finish my dissertation" (French, 1988, p. 488, *Italics in original*). Mira's use of "I" is

very indicative as she is determined to be the doer in the sentence. Her strength and determination show in the verb phrases she uses as well. She moves from "think" to "know" and ends with "will finish," which implies her persistence and self-confidence as self-redefinition starts with thinking, then moves to knowing, and ends with determining exactly what to do. When Ben asks her about the child he was planning to have with her, Mira is horrified. She realizes that "the two statements she had never felt permitted to utter, or even to think" are "*I am, I am, I am*" and "*I want, I want, I want*" (French, 1988, p. 489, Italics in original). She decides to use them right away and to base her whole future on them.

In addition to the subjective mode of the "I" in the two statements, the auxiliary verb "am" is one form of the verb to be pertaining to Mira's being and existence, and the verb "want" signifies Mira's awareness of her own wants and needs and her demand to follow them. She decides never to be held back by her past. She is aware that she has been thingified as a piece of furniture in her relationship with Norm, and as an act of self-respect and in an attempt to transcend her previous state, she has sold her house with its furniture to him. Her sense of self-respect and self-determination prevent her from being re-objectified in her relationship with Ben. She rejects his proposal of marriage fearing that she may be locked up in the same convent where what she wants or thinks, as a woman, does not count. She has decided to keep nurturing her mind and caring for herself by considering what she personally wants.

At this crossroads, when Mira is forced to choose between fulfilling her dreams and getting married to her lover Ben, she makes her mind to follow her own aspirations and desires. She has always "wanted to do her own work, wanted to pursue this stuff, this scholarship that she loved so much. It would be a sacrifice to go to Africa – it would hurt her career, would slow her work" (French, 1988, p. 490), and Mira is no longer willing to sacrifice her needs for the sake of others. It is not only that she is not ready for another Norm in her life, but also that she is determined not to be a replica of the selfless old Mira, who left school to be married to Norm and worked to help him pay for his medical studies.

In her doctoral dissertation *Women's Room: Women and the Confessional Mode*, Susannah Radstone (1989) states that the novel proposes "an identification with suffering" (Radstone, 1989, p. 102). Radstone sheds light on the difference between the Mira at the beginning of the novel and the one who walks down the beach at its end. As the one in the end of the novel announces her will to write down her life story, the two Miras merge together (Radstone, 1989, p. 106). We do agree to a great extent with Radstone's point of view. When Mira puts an end to her self-dividedness and to her life of suppression, she succeeds at defining herself as the author and the narrator of her own story. In that sense, it is interesting to notice the stylistic way French employs her use of language to deal with the old and new Miras in the novel, oscillating the reader between the pronouns "she" and "I" as the narrator throughout the novel appears at times as an involved first-person narrator and at other times as a detached third-person one. Undoubtedly, Mira transforms and does not remain the same old passive person she has always been. The narrated Mira metamorphoses into a narrating Mira, who has defined herself as a self-expressive writer and has authored her life using Cixous' white ink and seventeenth century Lady Winchilsea's pen. The pronoun "I" is only used when this defined Mira, the finder of her own room, speaks.

At the beginning of the novel, addressing the reader and using the pronoun "I," the narrator explains that she has some sympathy for Mira. When the same narrator, who turns out to be Mira herself, unfolds her stories with Norm and Ben, she refers to her old self as "she" or "Mira." Thus, the pronoun "she" refers to the Mira who has journeyed through her life before daring to use the pen and deserving to use the "I", and the pronoun "I" is only used by the grown-up Mira who has affirmed herself as a professor. It is used by the strong woman Mira has gradually become; Mira sees her whole life like she has never been able to see it before. Hence, the use of the two pronouns indicates the distance and the difference between the two Miras, the old and the new one. It represents Mira's transformation and final self-redefinition as a professor and a self-expressive writer who recalls the incidents and owns an agentic voice and vision.

At the end of the novel, Mira has become a teacher at a community college. She has, thus, fulfilled her dream.

Mira's acquired wisdom, even though it is accompanied by pain and disillusionment at times, is the art of knowing when and how to follow her heart. She states, "Some days I feel dead. I feel like a robot, treading out time" (French, 1988, p. 502), but she keeps looking further and forward. She has always known what the image women should follow in society is, but when she feels a threat against her own self and envisions a possibility of being erased, she chooses to break her silence and crosses the threshold, for she "can no longer speak anything but truth" (French, 1988, p. 502), and speaking truth has obviously not only caused her pain and loneliness but an awareness of her value as a woman who has an independent mind.

The pain Mira feels is also linked to a dream she has and wishes to make true, which is "a vision of community. Of the person merged with the group, yet still separate. Of harmony, not order" (French, 1988, p. 391). Her dream illustrates her desire to define the society she lives in, a wish for everyone to accept everyone with his or her differences, without attempting to mold others into a particular stereotypical shape. It is a prayer for society to celebrate justice and equality amongst its members. Her dream is inclusive because if society is defined, every individual in this society is defined as well. Mira's friend Kyla also dreams of a world where she can "bake bread and grow flowers and be taken seriously as an intelligent person" (French, 1988, p. 429). Kyla apparently wishes for what Margaret Fuller calls the fire and food for the mind. Her problem does not lie in the chores she has to do as a housewife, but in the belittling of her mind as a woman in a patriarchal society. She dreams to be respected and valued as an intelligent woman who is able to think, create, define, and name.

As Mira gives value to herself and creates a new definition for herself, she not only becomes a non-stereotypical woman, but she also shares her awareness of the danger and "evil of bigotry, stereotyping, prejudice" (384) with her sons. She urges them to be non-stereotypical individuals by contesting the male-dominated society's perspectives. She entreats them to have a vision of their own. She calls individuals who are stereotyped in society victims and asks her sons not to be driven by the way society wishes people would view each other, but to dare to put on new different non-stereotyping lenses and view the truth. Her dream consists of a wish for every person in society to choose to speak nothing but the truth the way she has personally done. She states,

everything and everyone around you is infected with bigotry and stereotyping, and by the time you actually meet and know some of its victims, you won't be able to see them through the lenses you've been handed. (French, 1988, p. 384)

The importance of one's choices is also highlighted in Deshpande's novel. At the end of the novel, Jaya repeats the final words of the sermon of the Hindu deity Krishna to Arjuna, the warrior accompanied by this deity. The words are "I have given you knowledge. Now you make the choice. The choice is yours. Do as you desire" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 192). Krishna's words stand for the dialogue Jaya runs with her own self. What she desires is represented by her insistence on breaking the silence between her and Mohan. It is true that she waits for him to fulfill his promise and return on Friday morning at the end of the novel. Nevertheless, she is aware that upon his return, he will find a new Jaya. Unlike Mira, Jaya remains married to Mohan as she states, "I'm Mohan's wife, I had thought" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 191). Jaya is determined to stay married on her own terms and to re-own the positive connotations of her name which Mohan has effectively erased. In her new relationship with Mohan, she chooses to be a Jaya wife, not a Suhasini one, and decides to follow Shakespeare's advice in his play *King Lear* by speaking what she feels, not what she ought to say.

Jaya questions herself for accepting to be a Suhasini housewife for a long time and for suppressing the talented woman inside her as she asks herself, "Why had I done that? Why had I suppressed that desperate woman?" and answers at the same time, "I have been scared, scared of breaking through that thin veneer of a happy family..." (Deshpande, 1989, p. 191). Her previous fear falls under what Horner refers to as the fear of success. If she becomes a successful writer, her marital relationship with Mohan will be impacted, and they will no longer be following the attributes of a happy family, where the husband is superior to his wife. She recognizes that she is not allowed to surpass her husband in her success, and this is why she stopped writing in the past.

Hence, Jaya's self-redefinition is a moment of recognition which she has reached. She recognizes that her decision to embrace the old desperate Jaya within her is fatal. She decides never to be separated from the old victorious child she has been before. She realizes that the separation between her and that child is no longer possible for the child is part and parcel of her victorious self. She asserts, "that child, hands in pockets, has been with me through the years. She is with me still" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 191).

Jaya decides to break the silence between her and Mohan. Now she is determined not only to speak but also to listen. She explains how the rigid rules of Sanskrit drama did not permit women to speak Sanskrit. Instead, they used a baby-like language called Prakrit. She recognizes that by being a silent and submissive Suhasini wife and a Seeta-writer, she has been using the same language used by those women characters in the Sanskrit drama. Now that she is determined to speak and fill "that hole in the heart" (192), Jaya is strong-willed not to speak Prakrit again. It is a decisive choice she makes at the end of the novel; unlike the women characters in the Sanskrit drama, she chooses to break the rigid rules and to speak the forbidden language. Her willful determination to use this language signifies her insistence on not going back to where she has been located in her marriage to Mohan. She recalls how her marriage to Mohan has effectively obliterated her name. He has replaced her positive name Jaya by the negative one Suhasini. She later finds out that her name is totally absent from her own family tree because she is married to Mohan. Finally, she recalls that after her marriage to Mohan, on the same spot where she wrote her name in the sand on the beach as a child, "there was just blankness, the sea had erased everything" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 161). Addressing herself, she instantly follows this memory with the reason behind the absence of her name, which is "You are his wife..." (Deshpande, 1989, p. 161).

Jaya's marriage to Mohan, like Mira's marriage to Norm, leads to the death of the free writer in Jaya and to the creation of Suhasini, the Seeta-writer. She recalls how she has been defined as an exhibitionist to Mohan, never as a writer. She remembers how angry and hurt Mohan was when finding her story published in a magazine, as he explains that people will suspect the couple in the story to be she and her husband. By writing her life story down, Jaya redefines herself as Jaya once again. She claims her name back. She remarks, "I was Jaya, Jaya for victory" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 137). She was Jaya in the past, and now she is re-establishing her position in the present. It is a status of beingness to her, which explains why she ends up using the verb to be "am" in the present tense. She only does this by subverting the mythical characters Sita, Savitri, and Draupadi and becoming the non-mythical victorious Jaya who follows her dreams instead of complying with her husband's wishes of silencing her.

Jaya's victory is marked by her writing of a non-Seeta work, which is the novel itself with all the incidents she has gone through and all the thoughts of resistance she has once entertained. It is a status of overcoming Horner's fear of success theory and abandoning Rich's special woman myth, where the word "special" depends on men's ideas of what it should be. Thus, her self-redefinition is based on her transformation from a special woman according to men's standards to a special woman according to her own leanings and inklings. When she was a Seeta-writer, she used to write to please her husband, and she has always been careful not to displease him. However, she is no longer afraid whether Mohan will be pleased by what she writes or not. She has unfolded her thoughts on paper for her own sake, as she states,

What have I achieved by this writing? The thought occurs to me again as I look at the neat pile of papers. Well, I've achieved this. I'm not afraid any more. The panic has gone. (Deshpande, 1989, p. 191)

Self-expression turns out to be the language women are not allowed to use in society. By expressing herself the way she desires, Jaya ends up speaking Sanskrit. She has written down everything for she is surrounded by "so many bits and pieces – a crazy conglomeration of shapes, sizes, and colours put together" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 188). As she overcomes her fear of success and successfully conveys herself using her own pen and talent as a writer, Jaya finds her own home. By authoring her life and writing her independent self, she brings back to life the old triumphant Jaya who was celebrated by her father, who told her once that she was "going to be different from others" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 136). Now, she is willing to consider returning with Mohan to their place at Churchgate. She is strong enough to

negotiate her new life with her husband, and she will not let anyone hijack her dreams. Her mental powers make her a winner, someone who really listens to the truth of her heart.

Mira and Jaya have chosen to announce themselves capable and competent beings in relation to others. Their ability to re-vision themselves is what allows them to make the right choices and become who they have always wished to become, the professor and the writer, respectively. They are determined not to be belittled anymore and to respect themselves by nurturing their minds and talents regardless of any consequences. As they embrace their new selves, they transcend their fragmented status and achieve their desired oneness. Their journeys prove to be ones from passivity to activity and from objectification to agency, and their quests are directed towards authenticity, self-assertion, voice and home.

5. Conclusion

The two novels end with the two women overcoming most of the patriarchal impediments on their way to self-redefinition. Mira and Jaya decide to use their weapons, which are their education and pen, respectively, to kill the selfless Angels in the House society wants them to be and to blaze their own self-asserting paths. By exploring marital relationships in two different cultures as portrayed in two twentieth-century works, this paper foregrounds women's ability to create if, and only if, they believe that they have what it takes. It urges women to awaken, speak their hearts' desires, and find their homes by expressing themselves.

Marriage is essential for the perseverance and growth of humanity all over the world. The challenges women face in the two novels lie in the male-dominated institution of marriage, which grants men power over women. Mira's dream in *The Women's Room* encapsulates a beautiful vision "of community. Of the person merged with the group, yet still separate. Of harmony, not order" (French, 1988, p. 391). Her vision carries a heartfelt wish for every man and woman to accept each other without any attempts of molding the other into a constraining fit that cripples rather than liberates. Certainly, women's voices are powerful enough to make positive changes not only in the way patriarchal societies perceive women, but also in the way women perceive themselves. These voices provide the rationale, the means, and the inspiration to create a balanced, essential life which responds to the urgings of both men and women. Once women begin to feel committed to their lives, they can never again be satisfied with the old passive way.

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العلاقات الزوجية والمقاومة وإعادة تعريف الذات في غرفة النساء وذلك الصمت الطويل

أمل الخياط، رلى قواس*

ملخص

تتناول الدراسة تصوير العلاقات الزوجية ومقاومة المرأة وتعريفها لذاتها في روايتي غرفة النساء (1977) للكاتبة Marilyn French، وذلك الصمت الطويل (1989) للكاتبة Shashi Deshpande، حيث تقوم بتتبع التطور في حياة الشخصيتين النسائيتين في الروايتين. في بداية الروايتين، تمثل كل من الشخصيتين شخصية المرأة الملائكية في المنزل. غير أنه يتكون لديهما إدراك لقدراتهما ومحاولات إسكاتهما من قبل المجتمع الذكوري، فتقومان بمقاومة محاولات إسكاتهما وتختاران ممارسة فاعليتهما في المجتمع. كذلك تظهر الدراسة أن رحلة "البحث عن صوت" التي تخوضها الشخصيتان هي رحلة "البحث عن بيت" في الوقت ذاته، وتوضح أن صوتيهما يحاولان إحداث تغيير في نظرة المرأة إلى نفسها وفي نظرة المجتمعات والثقافات إلى المرأة.

الكلمات الدالة: العلاقات الزوجية، المقاومة، إعادة تعريف الذات، المرأة الملائكية في المنزل، الفاعلية، رحلة "البحث عن صوت"، رحلة "البحث عن بيت".

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